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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: US RELIEF EFFORTS IN HAITI

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SUMMARY

¶1. All major Argentine newspapers reportedly positively on U.S. relief efforts in Haiti, echoing President Obama's comments that they are "the most important in recent time." Media coverage of U.S. troop deployments also was generally positive, focusing on the humanitarian nature of the mission as well as the inevitable security role. Criticism was attributed to other sources, such as Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez.

¶2. Most papers noted President Obama's inclusion of Argentina in the countries he thanked for their cooperation with relief efforts. TPS received very limited coverage in Argentina, although U.S. concerns about a wave of immigration were mentioned in several articles on the deteriorating situation in Haiti. A few articles also expressed concerns about the effective distribution and long-term impact of U.S. assistance. End summary.

POSITIVE PORTRAYAL OF U.S. RELIEF EFFORTS...

¶3. All major newspapers echoed Obama's comments that the efforts were "the most important in recent time." Most papers cited comments by U.S. officials that U.S. assistance will be long-term, citing Secretary Clinton's promise of aid "today, tomorrow, and in the future." Coverage also praised cooperation efforts between Obama and former Presidents Clinton and Bush in the creation of the "Bush-Clinton" Haiti Relief Fund.

¶4. The media also picked up speeches from other Obama Administration officials, highlighting U.S. calls for cooperation with other countries in the region. Centrist "Critica" notes that UN Special Envoy for Haiti Bill Clinton would arrive in Port-au-Prince January 19 to guarantee effective coordination of the relief efforts.

... AS WELL AS TROOP DEPLOYMENT

¶5. Argentine press was generally positively on U.S. troop deployments to Haiti, stressing the humanitarian mission but noting that, given the deteriorating security situation, their inevitable security role. One article noted that Haitians are "pleased" with the involvement of U.S. troops, who have helped secure supply planes and patrolled the streets to prevent plundering. More than 20,000 marines will be deployed in the territory to provide order, in their own style, over the chaos of insecurity and plundering, centrist Critica reports.

¶6. The media also reported Southern Command General P. K. Keen remarks, who detailed that 1,000 U.S. soldiers were already in Haiti, and the U.S. Army was distributing water and food. Keen was quoted saying that the U.S. Army would seek to provide a "safer environment" for the humanitarian aid. The report, in center-right newspaper "La Nacion," also says 3,500 soldiers will help the Haitian police in security operations in a coordinated action. Keen's comments to ABC news were also picked up by "The Buenos Aires Herald," which again stressed the humanitarian nature of the mission, while acknowledging that security would be a critical component.

¶7. There have been conflicting press reports on the numbers of U.S. troops sent to Haiti, ranging from 3,000 to 20,000. In an article with the headline "Marines arrive in the U.S.," Critica reports that the Haitian airport is "operated" by U.S. military forces and that U.S. President Obama has authorized the use of reservists to support the humanitarian mission in Haiti.

CRITICISMS MOSTLY ATTRIBUTED TO OTHERS

¶8. Argentine media quoted criticism from Venezuelan, French and Nicaraguan officials accusing the U.S. of establishing a military presence in Haiti. However, there were no opinion articles supporting these claims. Left-leaning pro-government "Pagina 12," quoting President Hugo Chavez with the headline "Marines instead of doctors," suggests a secret agenda of the U.S., with Chavez stating that "3,000 armed Marines" had been deployed on the island "as if they were going to war." "Pagina 12" also reported Nicaragua President Ortega's accusation that the U.S. was attempting to install U.S. troops in Haiti.

ARGENTINE HOSPITAL: POTENTIAL GOOD NEWS

STORY FOR U.S.-ARGENTINE RELATIONS?

¶9. A correspondent from "Clarín" sent to Haiti on special assignment reported that the Argentine mobile hospital in Port-au-Prince was the only operational hospital immediately following the disaster. According to the correspondent, the hospital, had been purchased from the U.S. and sent to Haiti before the earthquake to provide medical care to the UN mission in Haiti. (Note: OFDA and Southcom provided the hospital with a potable water plant on January 17 to enable it to continue operations. Embassy sent a press release announcing this assistance on January 18. End note.)

<http://www.clarin.com/diario/2010/01/16/elmundo/i-02120924.htm>

PRESIDENT OBAMA THANKS ARGENTINA

¶10. Several papers, including "Clarín" and "La Nación," the two largest dailies, noted that President Obama included Argentina among the countries he thanked for helping the U.S. with relief efforts. Perfil (centre-left opposition) highlighted Obama's comments that the U.S. was working with Argentina, along with other nations. State-run news agency Telam, in a report picked up by Clarín, cited California Senator Sam Farr as saying that Obama and Bill Clinton praised Argentina for being "the first country to arrive in Haiti, even before the U.S."

<http://www.clarin.com/diario/2010/01/16/elmundo/i-02120923.htm>

http://www.lanacion.com.ar/nota.asp?nota_id=1222975

<http://www.clarin.com/diario/2010/01/16/elmundo/i-02120923.htm>

IMMIGRATION CONCERNS FLAGGED, BUT SCANT MENTION OF TPS

¶11. Several articles reported on the possible deluge of Haitians seeking entry to the United States. "La Nación" reported hundreds of Haitians waiting for visas at the U.S. Embassy in Port-au-Prince, while Clarín reported U.S. concerns about a "wave of immigrants that are already knocking on the doors of the northern country." Only an editorial picked up by La Nación by Andrés Oppenheimer of the Miami Herald on TPS, praising President Obama's decision to grant temporary immigrants' status to over 100,000 undocumented Haitians living in the United States.

http://www.lanacion.com.ar/nota.asp?nota_id=1223590

SOME CONCERNS ABOUT AID DISTRIBUTION AND LONG-TERM RELIEF

¶12. "La Nación," while praising U.S. humanitarian efforts and donations, noted that there is concern over whether those funds will reach the victims of the catastrophe given the "organizational chaos." Furthermore, "La Nación" notes there are concerns over the real use of the U.S. aid in Haiti, after millions of Americans noticed that Haiti remains very poor in spite of the aid. "Página 12" reported criticisms over the U.S. management of the airport for delays in transporting aid.

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